

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

WILLIAM SHATNER

LEONARD NIMOY

CRITICAL OVERLOAD

ARTHUR C. CLARKE

C.J. Henderson

In nature there are neither rewards nor
punishments--there are consequences."

R.G. Ingersoll

After reading the Arthur C. Clarke story (reprinted and
enclosed with the game as a perk/bonus?), the player loads their
new CD and the game begins.

Title Sequence: a set piece. Night time. We see the silhouette
of a large, solid dog (setter, labrador) drinking from a lake. In
the distance, the dog's master whistles for it to return (they are
separated by a wire-mesh cyclone fence. Fence is clearly labeled:
RESTRICTED). The dog turns to obey, but is seized by a sudden,
painful fit. It gurgles, falls to the ground, then howls loud and
mournfully.

The master--identity still hidden by darkness--runs forward,
crawls under the same spot in the fence the dog must have used, and
races to the side of his faithful hound. Just as he reaches the
dog, the lights of a large truck come over a distant hill.

*Disguise
to use on Security
Animation for
Killing +*

*Game Concerns
control Planet
More Puzzles*

*Shatner/Nimoy can't die
Changing Environment
Done by Arthur
for Power
by Geo*

*= Nightclub - Classic
Restaurant on
Horse Farm
Wings*

The owner scoops up the dog and runs for the fence. Multiple sets of headlights are closing on the lake. Truck after truck pour over the hill, Then more approach from the other direction. When they reach the lake, both lines of trucks split, roll forward, and surround the lake.

The dog's master runs for the fence, looking to avoid detection. The trucks have completely circled the lake. Men are pouring out rapidly. Most of them begin unloading the trucks. A number head for the fence which surrounds the lake, powerful flashlights illuminating their way.

Master and dog reach the fence. The master searches for the slip-under point. The men with the flashlights are closing in. Shouts of "Secure the perimeter," "Get those screens unloaded," et cetera, add to the urgency.

The running man spots the slip-under point. A beam of light nails it. He stops. Waits. The light moves. He runs. Throwing himself forward, he slides under the fence, his faithful but now completely unmoving hound still in his arms. The light returns to the fence at the sound of the running man's movement over the grass, but it just misses his exit.

Shot changes: the lake is now in the distance. The master carrying his dog moves closer and closer to the foreground as the men from the trucks erect masking screens around the lake. Shouts of "Get it blocked off, let's go," and "We've got to have this site cleaned by morning," fade into the background as the running man

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

slowly approaches a light source in the foreground. Softly, we hear him say,

"Ranger, boy. Oh, Ranger."

It is the voice of Leonard Nimoy. He moves into the light. His dog is obviously dead. His tear-streaked face tells us he knows this. So do his words.

"Somebody's going to pay for this."

The scene shifts to a nightclub. Fast women, bright lights, excitement, music and noise. William Shatner is the obvious center of attention. As soon as this is established, Nimoy arrives and pulls him aside. We learn that Nimoy asked Shatner to meet him there. They move to a quiet place (outside?), and Nimoy relates what has happened. His dog has died drinking water out of a lake on land owned by the corporation for whom Shatner is a spokesperson.

The only reason Nimoy is even in the area was because of Shatner's invitation. Now his dog is dead.

Nimoy wants the corporation punished. Shatner says that the corporation's CEO is his friend, that they don't work that way-- they would never do something like this and try to cover it up. The two argue for a moment, then Shatner suggests that it's foolish for them to go round in circles. They can go to see the CEO of the corporation in the morning and straighten everything out. Nimoy stares at him for a moment ...

And the scene changes to the two of them arriving at the CEO's office the next morning. They are unexpected and thus asked to wait

a moment. They agree. While they wait, Shatner shows Nimoy something the corporation is working on that might soon put actors like themselves out of work.

It is a clip-on holographic generator that projects a mobile, active image of any person that has been programmed into it. Several high-ranking members of the corporation have been programmed into the unit already, as well as Shatner and Nimoy. Shatner demonstrates the unit. Then, trying to lighten Nimoy's mood, Shatner shows his friend what he (Shatner) looks like in Holograph, but enhances the size and muscles of the character to Herculean proportions. Nimoy chides him for showing off.

The camera is trained in close-up on the over-developed game image of Shatner. When it pulls back, Shatner turns the holograph projector off at the same time. Instead of returning to film, however, the Herculean "hologram" actually switches to Shatner's game image. At the same time--as the camera pulls back--we see that everything else has also changed over into game imagery as well. The CEO's secretary returns, also now a game image, telling them the CEO can see them now.

Shatner and Nimoy go through the massive doors to the CEO's office. The last credit is flashed. And the game begins.

Play starts in Corporate Headquarters.

Nimoy and Shatner go in to meet with the CEO. All the other corporate players--villainous heads of the different industries



NOTE: The first four pages of the first draft covered the intro from the death of Nimoy's dog Ranger to the beginning of actual play. This draft picks up there, replacing pages 5 thru 23 of the first draft.

Play starts in Corporate Headquarters.

* *** *

Nimoy and Shatner go in to meet with the CEO. All the other corporate players--villainous heads of the different industries within the Industrial Park--are present in holographic form ("beamed" in from their various locations throughout the Park).

* They are:

We didn't want to meet them, did we?

Ms. Parker: head of the Communications Center; twenty years with the company (all the others were brought in more recently to head their newly created divisions) She is the only red herring amongst the VPs (the Communications Center is the legitimate part of the corporation. It's head has to be clean to the outside world).

Dr. Fender: head of operations at the Cracking Plant; the most complete out-and-out villain as far as base motivations are concerned. He is the greediest of all the VPs. The only part of the scheme he is aware of is the oil-take-over operation.

Capt. Morgan: in charge of the Fishing Boat complex; like Fender, he is mainly in the dark, thinking the entire scheme revolves around sending signals out into the water to lure fish into the boat (which, indeed, once they control Gaea they will be able to do. By the time Shatner and/or Nimoy reaching the Fishing Boat, fish should be obediently swimming up and jumping into the processing plant part of the Boat by the scores).

Mr. Gunther: in command of both the Foundry and the Junkyard. Has overseen the secret digging of the mines and the building of all the complexes. Is aware of the secrets of the Cracking Plant, the Fishing Boat, and the Mines, but not the major secrets.

Prof. Gilson: overseer of both the Lab and the Electrical Plant (and also the Mines, which is still a secret at this stage of the game); he knows the full scope of the mechanics of the CEO's plan, but thinks it only goes as far as ruthless takeover of natural resources, control of the weather, et cetera. Is not aware of utopian aspects of CEO's plan.

The characters will not be named in play (CEO adjourns the meeting and all the holograms simply wink out. Gamer can click on each one's now empty seat to get a run down on who they are: name, title, extent of their dominion, career history, talents, habits, abilities, et cetera. {Clues to who exactly these people are, how they operate, how dangerous they are, et cetera, would be hidden here. The clever gamer will have a better idea of what to expect from each opponent and his domain as they move through the game if they study this area}).

ALSO: this would be an excellent place to hide the first clues that point toward where each VP has hidden their piece of the puzzle. It will also be noted within their bios that all of these people came to their jobs within the Park recently, all from extremely high-level positions elsewhere. It should be suspiciously obvious that these positions are (seemingly) steps down for all of these people (except, of course, for Ms. Parker who is not a recent addition).

One hologram remains after the meeting--a table-top, detailed image of the Industrial Park. The layout for the first level of play will be spread out here for the gamer. Obviously all of the secret sections--the mines, the tunnels from the Fishing Boat to

the other industries, et cetera, would not be shown in this public display. But, it would be enough to get the gamer started.

* *** *

And, the gamer starts by getting Shatner and Nimoy down to the business of hashing things out with the CEO. All lines of questioning will provide the same answer--that the CEO is blameless in the death of Ranger. The gamer will get the feeling that perhaps the CEO is not totally aware of everything going on within his own corporation.

Once the issue is forced and the gamer gets the CEO to admit to a one time accident, it will be brought up that Nimoy let Ranger get into a restricted area. "Look at our side--it was a one-time occurrence. These things do happen from time to time. We were out there immediately. No one has ever cleaned up an industrial accident quicker. And, no one else was inconvenienced--the accident occurred on our property. Property that, rightly, your dog shouldn't even have been on."

What is it Nimoy expects the CEO to do?

Seeming dead end. The CEO has admitted that it's possible the dog could have died from something that came from the corporation's Industrial Park. The CEO will even offer remuneration. Nimoy shouldn't have been where he was. What next?

* *** *

As the pair leave, there is a sudden, violent earthquake. Shatner and Nimoy are startled. They are used to the thought of

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

4

East Coast ?? How

* earthquakes since they live on the North American West Coast, but they are on the East Coast now. Earthquakes aren't supposed to happen there.

for Gary
By eavesdropping in on people running by, the pair discover that this is another "one-time" mishap (just like the poisonous sewage spill). The security people going by sound as if the quake was expected. They are now moving to initiate damage control as they did the night of the sewage spill.

they chose, didn't they?
NOTE: An advantage to the earthquake (besides being the "exciting moment we need to kick things off") is that we can have it disrupt communications between the Parks. Rather than making them petty fiefdoms with no inter-communication, we can merely knock that communication out. In fact, it can cut the Industrial Park off from the rest of the world. Shatner & Nimoy, cut off from the world, no phones, no roads--it's up to them and only them!

Nimoy must initiate play. He still has the revenge motivation which Shatner lacks. To Shatner, the sewage spill has been explained, earthquakes can be predicted--he simply has no compelling interest in further investigation. (Nimoy, upset and emotional ("I'm not a Vulcan--I just play one on TV"), has subconsciously been searching for sub-vocal, subliminal and contextual clues while Shatner's subconscious, having no reason to be upset, has been searching for reasonable explanations.

Nimoy can try to talk Shatner into going through the corporate files (if he tries hard enough he should succeed) or go it alone. If Nimoy goes alone, it should be practically impossible for him to be discovered. However, the search will longer. If Shatner and

X

Nimoy both go, search time will be cut greatly, but the possibility of discovery will be increased.

NOTE: Possibility for another Moral Dilemma. If discovered at this point (by security, et cetera), does the Gamer kill the corporate type that has discovered them, or simply tie them up and stash them in a closet? Everything necessary for either option could be easily at hand--a gun or length of pipe as well as ether (it is used as a solvent as well as an anesthetic) and a rope.

Investigation will turn up evidence that points to something sinister going on in the Industrial Park--specifically, in the Cracking Plant. Now, getting to this information required breaking into a restricted area of the Corporate HQ. There are no printers where the information is found. Trying to download it won't work; it can't be gotten out of the corporate computers without the correct password (which is impossible for the gamer to figure out). If anything further is going to be discovered, the Industrial Park will have to be invaded.

ALSO: This investigation will be the first chance the gamer has to see the Countdown Clock. Although they will not be given any answer as to what it is by the computer, they will be able to determine that everything within the Industrial Park is cued to this countdown.

The only point of entry to the rest of the Park from Corporate HQ is the Communications Center. From here, the corporation runs its Turner-like cable empire, and its multiple on-line services (the communications Center is still operating because the Park has its own Electrical Plant, and because it uses satellites, not phone

lines). It is obvious that the Corporation's communication's arm is it's most powerful--that they have connections to every single bit of the world-wide Net.

In fact, the obvious question will arise at this point--why is a corporation that has for decades been essentially only interested in communications, suddenly branching out into so many diversified heavy industries? Especially since they do not seem to be profit-oriented lines of business--attack (the single foundry, the single fishing boat, the small cracking plant).

On top of that, what lured the powerful business types running each of the sections of the Industrial Park to their current positions? On the surface, these seem like demotions for most of these people.

These factors (as well as the suspicions the mysterious Countdown Clock should provoke) would be the final pieces Nimoy needs to motivate Shatner into believing that something fishy is up. Regardless, Shatner is due for a recording session at the Communications Center shortly. He will have to go or people will wonder what is going on.

If the two stars are still teamed up, they can go in together. If Nimoy investigated alone, he will have to catch up to Shatner (on his way to the Communications Center) to be able to get from inside the Corporate HQ to inside the Industrial Park (due to the heavy security--everyone must be cleared past certain checkpoints--even the CEO).

* *** *

The pair take the monorail to the Communications Center. It is (they have been told) the only means of transport between most of the different venues within the Industrial Park. This will prove to be untrue later. Once inside the Communications Center, Shatner must keep everyone busy (re-recording Rocket Man or Mr. Tambourine Man perhaps {threatening to do Bilbo Baggins or Proud Mary if Nimoy kids him}), while Nimoy has to get away and find access to the computers.

Once he does this, he will find evidence that the Cracking Plant is planning to somehow take control of the world's oil supply. It seems obvious that proof of this can be found within the Cracking Plant which is the next stop in the Industrial Park on the monorail.

Once Nimoy shows Shatner what he has found here, if Shatner is not already convinced, he will be so now. Nimoy is fired up to go (not only does he want justice over Ranger, but everyone loves to prove they're right). Shatner slows him up. He tells him they'd better see what they can find to take with them to help them in their quest.

The pair will have a lot of options (they might even still have the ether and or gun from before). The must-take item is a portable computer (a compact, paperback-sized, slip-in-your-back-pocket proto-type) which would allow them to continue accessing the company's computers (and later, to communicate with Gaea) from any

point within the Industrial Park.

Also available here, duplicates of the personal holographic generator seen earlier in the pre-play sequence. Also; the Communications Center could offer them any number of essentials: cameras (good for gathering evidence), as well as a tool box (screwdrivers, wire cutters, hammer, etc). They might also find another loaded handgun. Whatever they take, however, at this point they will have to head off for the Cracking Plant.

* * * * *

Up until now, Shatner and Nimoy have been able to trade on their celebrity status and Shatner's position as company spokesman to move around somewhat freely. Quick thinking and/or fast talking will have been enough to get them out of most any problem up until this point. Once they sneak into the Cracking Plant, however, their cover is blown. They do not have official access for any areas within the Park outside of the Communications Center and HQ.

If they are anywhere else, they will be suspicious simply because they do not have authorization to be anywhere else. Each of these other areas is off-limits for the simple reason that they are corrupt enterprises where illegal, or at least questionable things are happening. The sole purpose of each of the Park's smaller industries is to enhance and complete the corporation's stranglehold over Gaea. No one of the villainous VPs--whether they are cooperating, sharing information, et cetera, with any of their fellow VPs or not--is going to want intruders wandering around

within their personal fiefdom.

This brings to mind the holographic generators. The gamer should not be allowed to have Shatner and/or Nimoy simply switch one on and wander wherever they want. It just makes things too easy. But, how do we limit them?

First: power limit. The generators do not run on replaceable batteries. They are rechargeable units. The generators should run out of juice after some set number of times being used (with recharge time being far too long for the gamer to be able to afford the wait).

Second: Halfway to that set number, the program should make the gamer come face-to-face with their disguise. To explain: say the gamer is masquerading as Dr. Fender; if the set number is 10, then during the fifth time the gamer uses the generator the real Dr. Fender will turn the corner and run into them. The gamer will then have to do either some quick thinking or fast running. This threat could possibly be avoided if the generator is not used too often within too short a period of time. (In other words, it is reliance on the generator we want to discourage--it should be an emergency solution only.)

* *** *

The investigation of the Cracking Plant accomplishes the following: It provides the pair with real proof that there is something sinister going on. Getting into the Cracking Plant should be easy for the gamer. So should the discovery that they have

WHAT IF THEY ENTER CRACK PLANT AND
DON'T USE
HOLD GEN

somehow found a way to divert all the planet's oil from its subterranean resting places around the world to the Cracking Plant. This one little plant is prepared to distill a thousand barrels of petroleum a day! Not so amazing in itself, except for the fact that the Plant is not cracking raw crude brought to it from the outside. The Cracking Plant is sitting atop a giant, open pool of oil--oil that just bubbles up obediently out of the ground, keeping a constant level no matter how much is taken out of the pool.

This is a fantastic discovery, but it is not necessarily illegal. It should raise enough suspicions to keep compelling the gamer forward, however. Coupling the one-time spill and the one-time earthquake with the sudden flow of all the world's oil into the place's coffers should not be too hard. Why? Because at this point, paper is found in a shredder.

The puzzle is to fit the shredded strips back together to read the memo that was shredded. Once this is done, the gamer will know that hard evidence exists within the Cracking Plant that the Industrial Park is merely a cover for some other massive operation. This information is not in the computers, however. The memo reveals that it is in Dr. Fender's office, in his secret room! What? Are they kidding? Is this some kind of gag?

Nimoy and Shatner will of course want to know more. The office, on the other side of the Cracking Plant, will have to be reached by crossing the Plant's open distillation area. Then, office security has to be breached, the secret room has to be

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

found, and the evidence recovered.

Once all this is done, Shatner and Nimoy will find actual, bankable take-to-the-authorities proof that there was indeed a chemical backup that poisoned the lake (and killed Nimoy's dog). There will also be evidence on hand that the earthquake was actually caused by the corporation's manipulations of the Earth's crust.

Why does Fender have this material, and why is it stored here? It is the VP's blackmail stash, in case things go south on him and the CEO tries to blame him for what has been going on. At first glance, the chemical spill and the earthquake seem to both be direct results of the opening of the oil pool. His notes prove, however, that these disasters were the expected consequences, not of his greedy plundering of the Earth, but of the Corporation's main project (something he knows is going on, but has no access to whatsoever. He knows there is a project, he just doesn't know what it entails).

Fender's notes explain that he was brought in to run the corporation's grab for control of the world's oil flow. But, since he has suspected since the beginning that this was not a main objective, but only some sort of first step toward some other goal, he has been watching out for things he could use as blackmail. The spill and the quake were the best he had to date.

ALSO: Our team of good guys will also come across personal musings of Fender's. He is not certain, of course, but he suspects

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

that his counterparts in the Park all have secret rooms of their own. He will have notes here on where he suspects the other secret rooms are. These will be hints of general locations of the rooms and even his ideas on what may or may not allow one entry.

FURTHER: he might reveal knowledge of the Mines at this point. It would be so vague as not to allow Shatner and Nimoy to find the Mines, but it would add to the this-is-bigger-than-it-looks feel without giving away any of the plot (the reference could be to underground tunnels connecting everything within the Industrial Park without actually revealing that there is a complete mining operation below {let alone revealing the purpose of that operation})).

Further exploring at this point will give the clue that points toward the corporate laptops as having the whole story inside them somewhere. Once Shatner and Nimoy access their stolen laptop, they will discover that Fender is correct--being able to siphon off the world's oil reserves is only a tiny part of a larger plan. And what is that plan? Fender has no details, but he believes it somehow involves taking over the world's computer network. FIND'S A PASSWORD TO ACCESS FILE

NOTE: Every use of the laptop will show Shatner and Nimoy the Countdown Clock. Also, every use of the laptop could be a trigger for cutting down the number. Use the laptop too many times--lose the game before you even get a chance to decide the fate of the world.

At the moment of this discovery, a Corporate security type will stumble across Nimoy and Shatner. Security has been searching for the missing laptop. This security worker has found the laptop

SECURITY ALERT!!

by tracing it with a hand-held tracking device. This cues Shatner and Nimoy that the laptops can be traced (when they are in use), and that they are extremely important.

Moral Decision #1:

Shatner and Nimoy can kill the security man, or they can tie him up, gag him, and stash him in a set of lockers. They are in a noisy, little-traveled area. No one would find him if they killed him, or hear him if they didn't.

FITS HARVESTER ENGINE!

As stated above, Nimoy and Shatner should pick up two points readily; (A) that the security man found them by tracing the laptop, and that (B) it can only be traced while it is in operation. If they don't take the hint and move on, more security types will arrive. All security types are armed. Shatner and Nimoy may take the gun from the guard they just subdued (or killed), or just his ammunition, if they so desire (giving them one, two or three weapons at that point).

ALSO: At this stage, escape by the monorail will be cut off. Shatner and Nimoy--now known to be up to something (at least to those security types operating within the Cracking Plant)--will be actively pursued from here on in (once again, at least while they are in the Plant). Their only option at this time if they want to leave the Cracking Plant would be to retreat into the maze of the Junkyard.

* *** *

The Junkyard complex is a sprawling maze. Even if Nimoy and Shatner are pursued into it, they should be able to loose anyone following them.

Now, between the clues Shatner and Nimoy already have and their knowledge of the layout of the Industrial Park, their next target should be the Lab. The gamer should be able to figure out that the next leg of their journey lies in that direction. Shatner and Nimoy will have to figure out the maze of the Junkyard to find their way there, of course.

Just because they saw a general holographic shape of the Junkyard on the meeting table, doesn't mean they have an understanding of every twist and turn within it. The pair would have two major options at this point ... one of them could head for the Lab while the other tries to draw off those following them, or both of them could head for the Lab.

No matter how obvious going to the Lab is to the gamer, of course, we don't want them cutting to the chase. We're not designing all these other points of interest for nothing. So, if both Nimoy and Shatner head for the Lab, they should be forced to retreat and double around on themselves until finally they have no option but than to escape into the Foundry.

If they split up, only the one pulling off the diversion will be forced into the Foundry, the other (the choice of who does what {Nimoy/Shatner} could easily be left up to the gamer) will be

forced to hide. He will not be able to come out (always some guards standing around in front of his hiding place, a truck backed up against the door he's hiding behind, et cetera) until the Foundry episode is finished (or, possible, if the gamer makes a bad choice in Moral Decision #2 {see below}, he could be run through the Fishing Boat maze).

Moral Decision #2:

If one of the pair is forced to hide in the Junkyard while the other runs the Foundry maze alone, the moment will come sooner or later when they could easily come out of hiding and rejoin the game--but they will have to kill to do so. If they kill, bad moral decision. If they wait it out, it is clear they will probably not be discovered. Good moral judgment.

NOTE: This, of course, calls up the problem of how the game follows both characters at once. Do we cut back and forth to offer the hiding character Moral Decision #2? How often do we offer this option? And, if a bad moral decision is made, how do we run the Foundry and Fishing Boat mazes? Simultaneously with a split screen? Play all of one then the other? Cut at dramatic moments and force the gamer to go back and forth? Let the gamer chose which they will play when? Et cetera.

mm?
PS
Sooner

In the Foundry, the chase will continue full force. The main puzzle of the Foundry is a maze run--the one or two heroes will be

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

*Do you mix Adventure w/
Arcade?
Be Careful!!*

15

pursued up and down the ladders, across the ingot storage piles, through the molten steel pouring area, et cetera.

NOTE: Since the Mines are also a run-and-jump maze (which the gamer won't reach until later on), we might want to make this one different. We could run them through the air conditioning system--tight quarters, memorization, and a different type of danger than what we've had so far in the game.

The purpose of the Foundry is to provide the hero(es) running its gauntlet the opportunity to stumble across a secret piece of software. First, the gamer has to successfully run the maze. There should be three or four ways to get through the Foundry from the entry point to where the software is hidden.

Following the clues found in Dr. Fender's, Shatner and Nimoy find their way to Mr. Gunther's secret room. Where Fender's was merely hidden (secret panel kind of affair), Gunther's is protected. His should be in the heart of the Foundry, behind the flow of the molten steel. One misstep brings death to any who would invade his domain.

Once the maze is run and the secret panel is penetrated, its prize turns out to be a piece of the software only recognizable by the special corporate laptops. If both our heroes are there and have the laptop--great. If the one running the Foundry maze has the laptop--great. If not, the two will have to come back together to use the software.

Sooner or later, of course, Shatner and/or Nimoy will be in a safe place with the laptop. They will probe the captured software

and penetrate a bit further into the mystery. At this point, the idea of the rapidly approaching evolution of Net consciousness will be explained in full (before security is able to trace the active laptop).

NOTE: At this point, the Countdown Clock will finally be explained. When the clock reaches whatever number we pick, then--boom--the Net is conscious. Also, if we don't want a real limit set, we could simply let the clock keep running. In other words, the gamer would still feel as if they were under a time constraint. But, in fact, whatever number the clock reaches when the gamer gets to the point we want them at when the Net becomes aware, then--boom--suddenly that number is the number.

ALSO: No mention of Gaea is made at this point. The Countdown Clock is only counting down Net consciousness arrival. There would still be lag time between complete Gaeian consciousness and Net consciousness (Gaea doesn't fully become conscious unless the corporate switch is thrown).

Back to Gunther's secrets. What will have been discovered is more details on the history of the Park. The facts will be presented detailing how the evolution of the coming Net consciousness was charted initially by the Communications branch, and how it was decided to exploit this knowledge. The specifics of the exploitation will not be outlined here. Gunther never found that much out. He does know that it somehow ties in with Cracking Plant, the Fishing Boat, and the Mines.

At this point, the gamer (obviously) learns about the existence of the Mines. If they did not yet discover the surface purpose of the Fishing Boat (cornering the fishing market), they learn it now. They already know the surface purpose of the Cracking

Plant. The Mines is the kicker here (What? A whole new level?). Their surface purpose, the shifting of the world's gold, diamonds, et cetera (somehow in the same manner as the world's oil is being manipulated) is given here.

This all is explained as Gunther's safety package. Where Fender wants to have a blackmail package to hold over the CEO, Gunther put this all together to protect himself from the CEO. His concern is (since he runs the Foundry and the Junkyard, neither of which has an overtly illicit purpose) that he might have been hired to be the fall guy if things go in the crapper. So, he put together his secret files as security.

At this point, however, whoever is conducting the investigation (Shatner and/or Nimoy) will have to move on. Either the gamer will have become aware that they can be tracked through the stolen laptop (when it is in operation) and will shut it down and move to a new spot, or they won't. *Shaw* *ALERT*

If they have not figured this out by this time, of course, they will be made aware by the security types running up and shooting at them. Regardless, either the gamer will move Nimoy and/or Shatner back into the maze of the Junkyard voluntarily, or be chased back there.

Moral Decision #3:

During the new chase through the Junkyard, at one point the only way for Shatner and Nimoy (this wouldn't occur until they were

reunited) to escape will be for them to bring a load of junk down on the security types pursuing them. The ploy will work, trapping everyone chasing them. Those trapped will scream out for mercy ("We'll die if you don't help us).

The Decision: neither Shatner or Nimoy have killed anyone, but they have injured them. Do they give those trapped the mobile phone just out of reach so they can call for help? Do they kick the phone away? Do they finish them off? Et cetera.

Once this decision is made one way or the other and a new hiding place has been found, then it's time to figure out what is really going on. What exactly is the corporation working on? How does the world-wide Net coming to life come into the corporate plan for taking over the flow of the world's oil, it's gold and diamonds and fish, et cetera? How can capturing this "Net consciousness" help them in any of these ways? Their next trip into the laptop will reveal the entire story.

Also: At this point, Shatner and Nimoy will be able to access and communicate with the slowly awakening Gaea. Their constant probing has attracted it's attention (it is looking for the same answers they are {Gaea comes to them}). But, Nimoy and Shatner do not recognize this as the personification of a world will. They merely know that the laptop is suddenly probed by someone/thing {their guess is that the net consciousness is trying to defend itself} with the same concerns they have).

At the moment they figure this much out, however, an overwhelming number of security people will trace them through the laptop. This will be sudden and surprising. Surrounded, there will be nowhere for the pair to run. The laptop will express its concern for their situation. Trapped, no matter how insane it might seem, their only chance will be to ask Gaea for help.

Moral Decision #4:

Shatner and Nimoy will be given several options by Gaea, means by which she can help them. If they opt for tornadoes or lightning ("Yes--kill as many of them as possible."), that would be the bad decision. If they opt for fog or cold ("Yes--we don't want to hurt anyone if we can help it."), that of course, would be the good decision.

Whichever path is chosen, Nimoy and Shatner will escape at this point. The problem is, there will seem to be no way for them to stay out of security's hands except by running around and around in the Junkyard. The pair can stay ahead of those pursuing them and keep finding great hiding places, but all paths out of the Junkyard will be blocked. All except for those Mines they found out about earlier.

Sooner or later, Shatner and Nimoy will have to hide and consult their laptop again. Further investigation (they could even ask Gaea) will lead them to the entrance to the corporate mining

concerns. There could also be a one-in-one-hundred genius kind of way of spotting the entrance without using the laptop (perhaps using the correct disguise {Gunther}).

* *** *

The Mines are the reason there is a road from nearly every part of the Industrial Park into the Junkyard. The core of the corporation's secret operation is hidden underground in the Mines. The only way out of the Industrial Park is for Shatner and Nimoy to find their way down into and then through the mines (down to where the corporation is working its evil plan).

Misdirection is a large part of the game. Nothing is as it seems (from the levels of secrecy to the disguises). The gamer, who at this point could still think we want them to escape the Park and bring in the authorities, would see the Mines as: "Ah, ha, this is how I get out of the damn Park."

But, no matter what the gamer is using for their motivation, however, ("I want to get to the outside world and expose what is happening/I want to free the Net consciousness/I want to save my ass/I want to investigate this bizarre notion that the world can come to consciousness/I want to wreck the corporation's machines and save the planet"), every single answer will lead them down into the mines. It is their only option at this point outside of surrender (and what fun would that be?).

The Mines are, as one would expect, one big maze. The area should have three different approaches. By consulting their laptop,

Nimoy and Shatner will know when they descend into the mines that they have three choices of ways through. They can:

- A. Take the back door way in: (total maze memorization. Long and hard but perfectly safe. No guards will find them, no pitfalls, no traps, et cetera).
- B. Take the mid-level way in: (a series of tunnels no longer used by the corporation because they're considered too dangerous. They were hastily dug in the beginning for a purpose which has now been satisfied. They are now plagued by constant rock slides, gas leaks, magma flows, explosions, et cetera, and thus avoided.

The gamer would have to find their way through a different maze than Option A/C--an easier maze to memorize, but one plagued by the above listed problems.

- C. Take the brazen way (and fight their way in like some kind of berserk commando). NOTE: Option C would utilize the same route map as Option A. The game would simply replace hiding places with killing zones. This would, of course, be rife with moral implications.

Moral Decision #5:

Obviously, this moral decision would be generated if the gamer were to choose Option C above. Although they would not realize it, of course, by doing so they would be staking the metaphysical deck against themselves by killing their way through.

Equally obvious, options A & C could easily alternate. Every time you hide--good moral decision. Every time you kill--bad moral decision. The rationale of killing--because-it's-expedient would not help. Running against the clock will not sway Gaea at judgment time.

During the Mine maze, no matter which option is picked, eventually the gamer will come to a point where they seemingly can go no further. They are on a path that is obviously often travelled, and yet it seems to go nowhere.

This time they have no clues from Fender, but then they shouldn't need any. It should be obvious that there is some sort of secret door somewhere around. Searching the area will give them access to another secret room, which will deliver unto them yet another piece of software they can use in their laptop.

What Shatner and Nimoy have found is Prof. Gilson's secret hideaway--the place he does all his private thinking. A search of his files will reveal yet another piece of software which will only function in the laptop.

Its code broken, Nimoy and Shatner will finally learn exactly how the entire Industrial Park operates. The Mines were dug to allow the placement of neural implants in a geometric pattern. Having these "hard" implants positioned under the crust of the Earth allows the corporation to tap into Gaea's metaphysical consciousness through its physical mass (like the brain implants inserted beneath the skull and used by researchers to tap into human consciousness).

ALSO: this software reveals the hidden purpose of the Fishing Boat. A tunnel from the Mines leads to the ocean. Monstrously long cables extend from the Mine complex not just to the Fishing Boat, but hundreds of miles out into the ocean.

The reason for this? The human brain is essentially a wet battery containing electrical impulses. For Gaea to actually have a functional, conscious brain capable of thought, decision making, random choice, et cetera, it would have to have a storage area for memories (memories coupled with instinct are the basic building blocks of decision making). The oceans of the world, already complete with currents, seemed perfectly suited to serve that purpose.

Energy from the Electrical Plant is fed into the ocean through the cables run from the Mines through the Fishing Boat. This is tuned to a specific pulse, one that sends "subliminal" messages to Gaea, bending her to the will of whoever is at the controls. It has already proved to work.

Nimoy and Shatner, unconscious of the fact they were at the "controls" to the planet, have already succeeded in getting Gaea to do their bidding (as has the corporation throughout the game by getting the oil to flow and the fish to come to the obediently). It has obeyed because it has been receiving their requests over on the corporation's super secret laptops--a device passed out only to VPs (and the CEO, of course)--the ultimate product of the Communications Center ... a device for communicating with, and training, an entire planet!

So, the Electrical Plant, besides providing the energy the entire Industrial Park needs, is now far more importantly the crux of the matter. It is the source of the electrical current being

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

25

generated and pumped into the ocean, filling it with happy thoughts about the corporation.

At this point, the entire scope of the corporation's plot is clear. In the beginning, they were essentially a communications firm. When the possibility of the World Net coming to consciousness was discovered (along with the fact that it might possibly be manipulated to merge with the very planet to form a living, thinking world), the corporation (in the person of the CEO) determined to set things up so they could control this consciousness for their own ends.

In other words: there would have been no Net consciousness--let alone planetary consciousness--if it weren't for the greedy, manipulative corporation.

The Cracking Plant and the Foundry were erected to allow the these seeming maniacs to not only produce the materials they needed for the completion of their gigantic project, but also to help cover the actual amount of secret terraforming (the Mines and the tunnel leading to the Fishing Boat) which they would need to perform. The Junkyard was created not just to service the Foundry but also to serve as a blanket over the area above the Mines to keep anyone from noticing the corporation's underground activities.

The Fishing Boat was brought in to give the corporation a way of both hiding the control cables they were running up from the Mines (and from the Electrical Plant {the Mines have the actual implants, the Plant merely supplies the power) to the ocean, and to

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

26

allow them to extend the cables out into the ocean (after having actually used the massive vessel to secretly lay the cables in the first place).

Now, at this point Nimoy and Shatner have accessed a lot of information, which means that after all these facts have been gathered, the security people have certainly had enough time to track them down once more.

Moral Decision #6:

At this point, the only way out is to again request Gaea's help. As always, the suggestions will be things like: drop the cavern roof on the enemy (bad) or cave in a particular section which will only block them off, but not kill them (good).

ALSO: at this point, it's time to clear out of the Mines. And, the only way to do that at this point will be to climb up out through the cavern that leads to the Fishing Boat.

* *** *

This will be a difficult climb, with points where the two heroes have to help each other, where each hand-hold has to be thought out, et cetera. Gloves and rags and other things that have been picked up along the way (even the straps from the cameras they may or may not have taken) could all be important here.

ALSO: They would also have to abandon practically everything they have picked up along the way. Weight would be a primary concern

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

27

at this point. Every ounce abandoned here would increase their chances of survival. In fact, there should be several points they should not be able to pass without abandoning a certain number of things from their inventory (most of the remainder of the game is all "thought" driven. We increase gamer paranoia by stripping them of all the crap they've gathered, but we actually reward them for learning to play a different way for once).

And, once Shatner and Nimoy get up to the Fishing Boat, they will then have to work out how to get out of the cavern and onto the boat, as well as how to get up through the boat, and back onto dry land. If they do it correctly, no chasing, no danger. If they goof up--well then--danger and chasing until they manage to get up on deck.

ALSO: If one of them did get diverted to the Fishing Boat earlier in the game, they should be able to easily find their way now. No sense in replaying the maze with all of its dangers. Figuring out the pattern once should be enough. The gamer is rewarded with a sense of speeding through the Fishing Boat at this point by having played it before. If they haven't, then they're rewarded with an exciting chase.

Moral Decision #7:

Whenever the Fishing Boat maze is run, it will be made clear to the characters that the fish are being controlled. If this hits their sense of moral indignation and they wreck the controls and

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

28

free the fish--that's a good thing. If they leave the fish to their fate--that's a bad thing. Remember ... every thing they do is being monitored by Gaea. It is learning from them. If they teach the planet that there is nothing desirable in allowing weaker beings free will or a sporting chance ... like I said, a bad thing.

One way or the other, though, whenever they are finally on deck (if they aren't already being pursued) they will be spotted by security types. The only way out--you guessed it--once more, back into the Junkyard.

Moral Decision #8:

All right, Shatner and Nimoy may be trapped in the Junkyard once more, but this time they are armed with knowledge. Now they know they can ask Gaea for help (the thing that prevents this on the Fishing Boat is the fact they are being chased. No time to catch their breath. Only once they are hiding in the Junkyard do they have time to play around with the laptop).

Once they are again in touch with the Gaeian consciousness, it can offer them fire (magma pits to burn your enemies to death {bad}) or ice (freezing cold to slow them down, make them slip, et cetera {good}).

ALSO: This does more than simply give us a chance to change the scenery in apocalyptic fashion. This bit of help from Gaea should also clear the way for Nimoy and Shatner to the next stop in

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

29

the Park. It could also cut off the monorail, roads and tunnels, separating the Electrical Plant and the Lab from the rest of the Industrial Park (which would mean from here on in the amount of security types could be drastically reduced).

And, escape from the Junkyard this time takes our boys into the Electrical Plant. From here Shatner and Nimoy can enter easily and make it to Development. Here they find two more of the clip-on holographic generators.

NOTE: Why--when we limited the first ones they found so much-- should we give them another set now? We don't know how much the gamer is going to use the first generator they took. Maybe a little, maybe a lot. Whichever, we don't want to devise ways to make this work only to have it ignored. So, one part of the game should be disguise intensive. We discourage it through a lot of the game to make the gamer do things they way we want, then give them an entire level where the only answer is the generator.

As soon as Nimoy and Shatner clip them on and test them, assuming the identities of two of the corporate bad guys, security men will arrive. The pair will be split up at this point ("Ah, here you are," says the head of the security team. They have been assigned to find every VP and stay with them while Shatner and Nimoy are running loose).

Security will be under the impression that both of the VP's have meetings and will imply that they will escort them immediately to the level of the Electrical Plant where they have to go next. The gamer, of course, will only be able to follow along as one of the two heroes. Whichever one they have chosen to follow, the other

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

30

will assert that they should meet at the Lab next "After our, ah, meetings."

So, in the disguise of one of the corporate bigwigs, the gamer must move either Shatner or Nimoy through the Electrical Plant, with the security men all around. After they finally shake the security team, they will then have to make it to the Lab without making any mistakes that might give them away.

Along the way, the gamer will have to duck other VPs, more security teams, and find the proper codes for entrance to the Lab. This is the brain center of the corporation's plot. The gamer will have to find this material.

Also: Once the codes have been found, there will be an announcement over the intercom system. It is suspected that there are intruders in the Electrical Plant. Everyone is to submit to search upon demand by security.

Moral Decision #9:

The gamer cannot access Gaea at this point (No matter who the gamer chose to be, they hand off the laptop to the other hero seconds before security arrived--the unseen gamer will always take the laptop away). That means the gamer will have to use physical means to subdue anyone who catches on to their disguise.

Even if the gamer makes no mistakes, their projector will run out of juice at the wrong moment. One way or the other, they will be found out by security. Their choice, kill their way out of

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

31

trouble or not. Even if they no longer have a gun, the situation will present them with a way to kill or not (push enemy over a railing, slam them in the head with a steel door, et cetera).

This could be made to affect the game dramatically. Every security team that approaches will be accompanied by a VP. Thus, by choosing violence, the gamer would risk not only moral downfall, but there is also the possibility that they might kill their own partner. (Kill Shatner's character, lose command and emotion options. Kill Nimoy's character, lose logic and science skill options).

W/H

Eventually, either both characters or the one surviving will make it to the Lab. Now the showdown begins. For the sake of simpler story-telling, let's assume both Nimoy and Shatner have made it alive to the Lab.

* *** *

The Lab is completely deserted at this time (everyone has been removed because {A} with the moment of global consciousness close at hand they are needed at other control centers and {B} they have been pressed into the service of searching for Shatner and Nimoy).

What the gamer needs to discover here is the control center within Development where the corporation actually communicates with the planet.

Where is their hand-held proto-type? While the gamer was moving Nimoy or Shatner around without it, the hero not seen got

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

32

into a scrape of their own. It is explained that the proto-type is gone for good. Thus, the necessity for the search.

And, once the gamer reaches this area, they will discover that they are out of time. The Countdown Clock (unavailable to them for quite some time) has reached the Destiny Number. Time is up. The corporation has brought the Net to consciousness. They are in complete control of this artificial, machine intelligence. They can download anyone's information, shift bank numbers, basically make any computer do anything they command (and not just any Net connected computer--they can reach to any place current is flowing. Any computer running on electricity not supplied by a private generator is now under their control).

What to do? Get Gaea to help disrupt this before the corporation takes it over as well? Possible. But the gamer, as either Shatner or Nimoy, will have to slip on the single helmet connected to the control panel and communicate directly with the awakening Earth in the simplest manner.

Now, instead of the laptop breaking communication down into rudimentary sentences, the gamer receives truly primal stuff--a set piece that shows the awakening of the Earth's consciousness. By the time the helmet ride is over, Shatner and Nimoy will have deduced that:

- A. The corporation is right. The Net is coming to an overload point (electrical overload interference fusing with the magnetic fields of the Earth) where it will create a complete consciousness for the planet.

TOXATO
TELL
GAMER
LAPTOP IS
GONE.

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

33

- B. The planet is responding. It will come to consciousness in a matter of minutes.
- C. If the controls the corporation have put in place are not severed, the Earth will be under the complete control of whoever is at the helm of the corporate control switches for all eternity.

Aware (because of the helmet trip) that if they act now they can deny the corporation mastery of the Net, Shatner and Nimoy wreck the control panel. Whatever happens, they decide, it will happen with no one at the helm.

At this point, the CEO arrives with an overwhelming amount of security people. Escape, resistance--both are futile. The CEO explains his plan--he allowed his underlings to believe control of the planet would be used to loot it, to rent it out to countries to destroy their enemies, et cetera. His plan all along, however, has been to use it for good. To control the seasons, create a paradise for humanity, et cetera.

Now, however, that's all been ruined. The surprise: the CEO is not angry. Why? The CEO has seen his dream getting out of hand for some time and has been wondering if he would be able to control those under him.

At this point, Shatner's set-piece is a speech on who gave the CEO the right to play God? How was he going to decide who lived and who died once he took over the planet? How did he plan on feeding everyone? Et cetera.

After that, Nimoy's set piece points out what everyone seems to have forgotten--Gaea is still going to come to consciousness.

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

34

Mankind simply won't be able to control what happens.

Moral Decision #10:

The CEO offers that they could pull the plug. Do they dampen things down or not? By flooding the ocean through the Fishing Boat with a negative charge at the moment of consciousness attainment, they could disrupt the coming global consciousness. Do they shut things down and send Mother Nature back to the behind the scenes way things have always been ... or not?

If the gamer chooses this route, all previous Moral Decisions are overridden. The problem becomes a race against the clock to get everything done in time. They succeed. Everything goes back to the way it was.

Game over.

Or:

If the gamer chooses to let Gaea awaken, then the previous Moral Decisions come into play. If the majority of their decisions were "good," then Gaea will be "good." Or visa versa.

If the majority was good, great. Then the world comes "on-line" and explains that Shatner and Nimoy's Moral Decisions taught it respect for life, et cetera, and that if humanity will just cooperate, everything will be great for everyone from now on.

Game over.

Or:

If the gamer chooses to let Gaea awaken, and the majority of

CRITICAL OVERLOAD/C.J. Henderson

35

their previous Moral Decisions were "bad," then Gaea, of course, will be "bad." When the world comes "on-line" in this scenario, it will explain that Shatner and Nimoy's Moral Decisions taught it no respect for life, et cetera, and that humanity had it's chance and that now, it's all over.

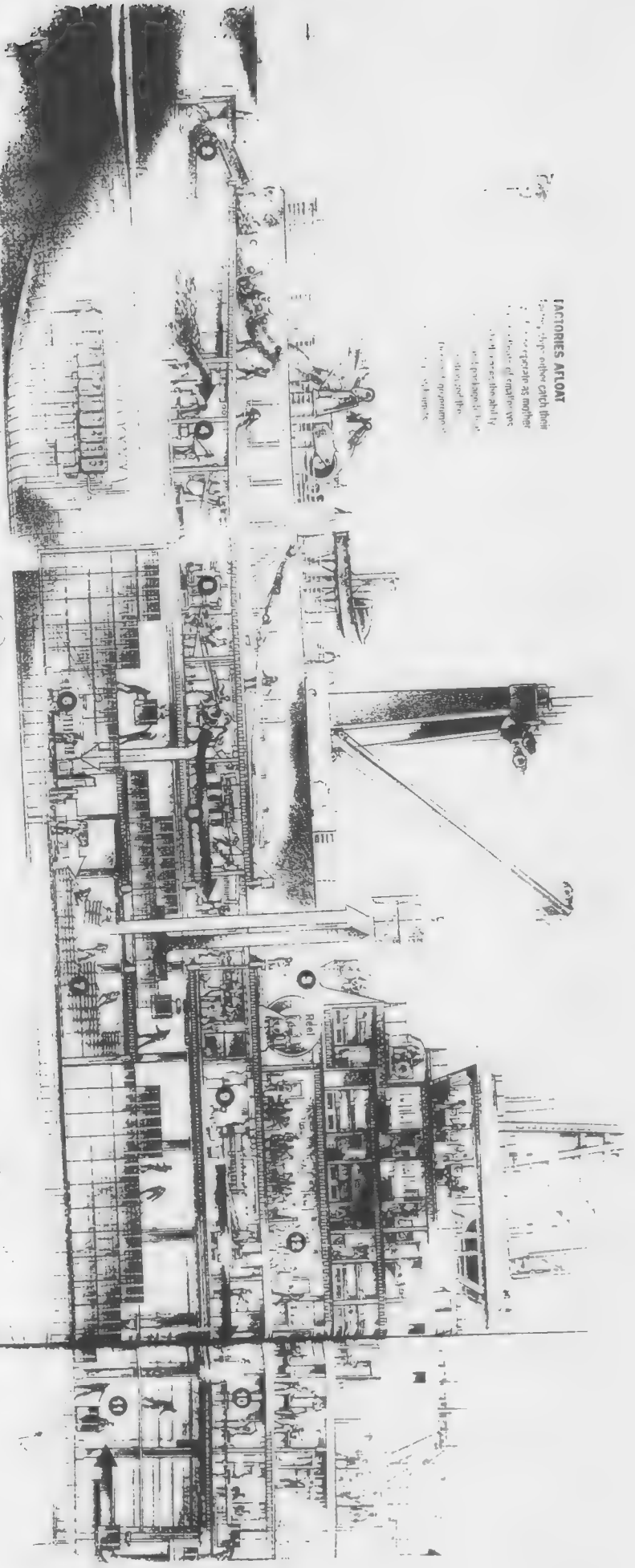
Gaea will announce that life on planet Earth has just come to an end for our species. There will be no way on Earth to stop the Gaea Force. It controls everything. Every attempt to do so will only make it madder.

As everyone stares at the communication's screen in horror, Gaea will show everyone the future. Unlimited earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanos, et cetera. All around them, the building will begin to shake, lava will flow, the sky will go dark, and everyone will die.

Game over.

FACTORIES AFOAT

Factory ships collect catch from fishing grounds as mother ships. They are the only vessels that can process the catch on board, and they are the only ones that can store the catch for long periods of time.



The factory ship is a floating factory. It is a large ship with a complex internal structure, including a large crane and a large storage area for the catch. The ship is shown from a side-on perspective, highlighting its massive scale and industrial nature.

SQUID JIGGER

The squid jigger is a small, fast-moving ship that specializes in catching squid. It is shown from a side-on perspective, highlighting its sleek design and speed.

LONG LINER



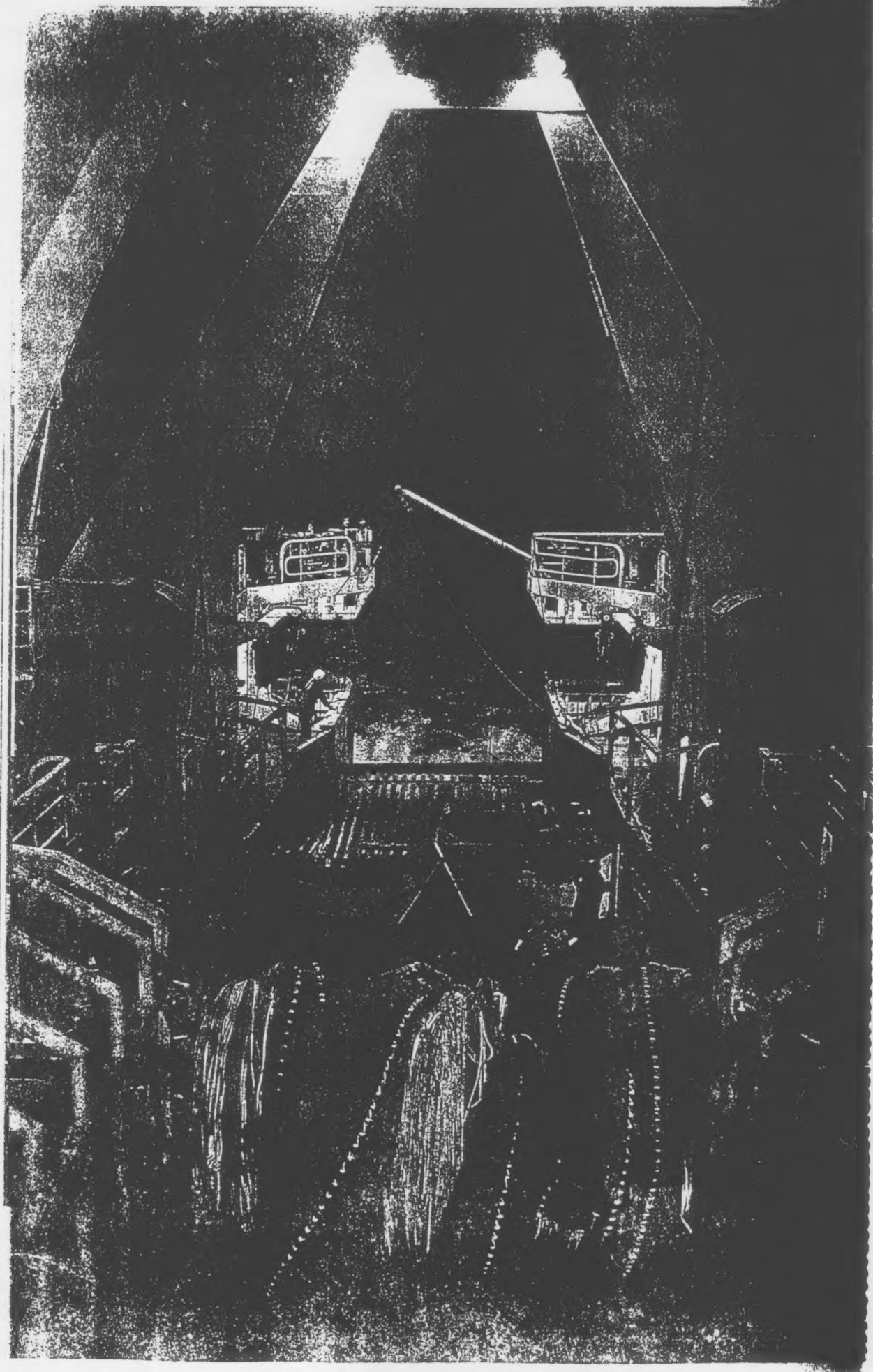
HIGH TECH FISHING

High tech fishing involves the use of advanced technology to locate and catch fish. This includes the use of sonar, GPS, and other electronic equipment. The ship is shown from a side-on perspective, highlighting its modern design and equipment.

Harvester the High

More than 100 years ago, the world's first factory ship was built. It was a small, simple ship, but it was the first of its kind. Today, factory ships are some of the most advanced and largest ships in the world. They are used to catch a wide variety of fish, including squid, tuna, and salmon. The factory ship is a floating factory, and it is the only vessel that can process the catch on board. It is also the only vessel that can store the catch for long periods of time. The factory ship is a marvel of modern technology, and it is the only vessel that can harvest the high seas.





THE SEA IS DARK with rain. The sky is cold with winter. In Vigo, on the west coast of Spain, the big ships slip out of the harbor as softly as ghosts: The *León Marco Cinco*, heading north for ice-strewn, windy seas; the *Farpesca Cuarto*, going south to the Falkland Islands for squid; and, most fatefully, a 256-foot trawler called the *Estai*, whose journeys will eventually bring it under gunfire in the North Atlantic. The ships—the most capable fishing vessels the world has known—vanish into the rain long before they hit open water; their departure seems as steady and silent as if they had just faded away.

"There will always be shoemakers and fishermen," Lazaro Larzabal told me before he left. He is skipper of the *León Marco Cinco*. But he sounded too insistent, as though he didn't quite believe it. Like all fishermen, he knows there's trouble at sea.

The trouble is simple: There are too many fishermen and not enough fish. This is not yet a crisis in the dire terms to which the world is accustomed—there are no long lines at fish markets with empty stalls, no skyrocketing prices, no famine on the beach. The annual catch from the sea has peaked at about 78 million metric tons (86 million short tons) of fish, and seems stable—so far. But several factors worry those who rely on the sea for food and money.

A 50-year boom in fishing technology has created an immensely powerful industrial fleet—37,000 ships crewed by about a million people worldwide—based on freezer trawlers that can catch and process a ton or more of fish an hour.

Small-boat, traditional fishermen probably

harvest 5 million, yet they catch only about half the world's fish. In some poor countries a small boat and a basket of line may be the last chance for a man to survive.

In many places fish stocks are being damaged by pollution, by destruction of wetlands that serve as nurseries and provide food, by the waste of unprofitable fish (called "bycatch"), and, above all, simply by overfishing. As a result of these changes, some fish stocks have collapsed, and many important groups of fish are fished either to the sustainable capacity or beyond it.

As I watch the ships leave Vigo, moving inexorably into a season, a year, perhaps a decade of conflict, I wonder if this problem can be resolved before it grows into a catastrophe. It doesn't look easy. Fishing is a 70-billion-dollar-a-year industry with deep roots in national pride and culture and an age-old tradition of freedom, but as governments struggle to solve the problems at sea, they inevitably create laws that challenge that freedom. The outcome is turmoil. In the year and a half that I follow the story, I see solutions as well as



Fishing goes global

Designed to swallow 60 metric tons of fish per haul, the Icelandic freezer trawler *Svalbakur* (facing page) combs icy home waters. Declining fish stocks in Europe have forced some fleets to seek opportunity elsewhere. Boats from Vigo, Spain, Europe's largest fishing port (above), roam from Africa to Greenland.

MICHAEL PARFIT, a frequent contributor whose last story took him aboard the Canadian Pacific Railroad (December 1994), writes—and goes fishing when he can—in Montana. ROBB KENDRICK, a freelance photographer and landlubber who grew up in Hereford, Texas, has visited all seven continents on assignment for the magazine.



Salmon fever



Boat 32040, a patrol boat, is shown in the foreground. The boat is moving through rough water, and the image is high-contrast and grainy. The boat's number, 32040, is visible on its side.